Where's Guare? Way Out West

San Diego's Old Globe Theatre pulled both commodities out of its institutional hat, but Trip Cullman, the director, has brought off the coup of casting Karen Ziemba in the role that made Ms. Ziemba a stage star. Ms. Ziemba won a well-deserved Tony for "Contact," but in recent years she's been relegated to second-banana status on Broadway, and this is the first time that I've seen her in a straight play. It was worth the wait. Ms. Ziemba plays Ouisa, the urbane socialite of "Six Degrees," with an open hearted warmth that puts a fresh and convincing spin on Mr. Guare's script.

SIX DEGREES OF SEPARATION
Old Globe Theatre, 1549 El Prado, Balboa Park, San Diego ($29-$55), 619-234-5633, closes Feb. 15

RICH AND FAMOUS
American Conservatory Theater, 41 Geary St., San Francisco ($17-$80), 415-749-2227, closes Feb. 8

THE AMERICAN PLAN
Manhattan Theatre Club, Samuel J. Friedman Theatre, 236 W. 47th St., New York ($46.50-$60), 212-239-6800/400-139-7250, closes Mar. 15

Mr. Strickland doesn't seem to stick with his plan very long, but he finds his way into the various parts of Mr. Cullman's cast, Thomas Jay Ryan, Catherine O'Hara and Sloan Greer in particular, are everything they ought to be. As for Andromache Chauffard, which is dominated by two well-executed Helen Frankentler, a young man with a bright future, it looks like the home of a top-notch art dealer who wonders where his next sale is coming from. Broadway is due for a revival of "Six Degrees of Separation." When it comes, I hope it's as good.

Thomas Jay Ryan, left, and Karen Ziemba, above, in "Six Degrees of Separation."
THEATER REVIEW

A superficial return for

'Six Degrees of Separation'

Several subtle yet powerful shadings of John Guare's 1990 play go missing in the Old Globe's production.

CHARLES McNULTY
THEATRE CRITIC
REPORTING FROM SAN DIEGO

A few things have changed since John Guare's 'Six Degrees of Separation' first held the mirror up to New York's social climbing society near two decades ago. The Fifth Avenue setting graduated from million- to billion-dollar deals, the Asians lost their yen for tourist treasures, and International Point schemes came to replace the more personalized (and relatively small potato) can games of yore. But as the Old Globe production of Guare's 1990 play makes clear, this is pretty much the same in the deluxe offenses of the rich and super-rich.

And now, money-making machinations take up most of the day and night. The kids' education is still an unshakable source of networking and status-conferring. And transferring experience into bonding dinner-party anecdotes remains the ultimate point of existence.

Guinevere herself is a success, which might explain the generosity of spirit that accompanies his comic diminution of the moves and manners of those conspiciously consuming urban types. Ranging from charity function to the latest restaurant opening, these characters surround themselves with elegance and beauty, but their competitiveness and superficiality have lost all sight of imagination and truth.

A similar superficiality can be detected in the handling of this mostly enjoyable yet ultimately tiresome revival. Directed by Trip Cullman with a brisk, clean efficiency, the production doesn't dwell long enough in Guinevere's glittering shallows for us to become aware of the world's hidden depths. The delivery is sharp, slick and surface-oriented — an ice skate across a spray that hasn't lost its diamond clarity.

The cast is headed by Broadway veteran Karen Ziemba (a Tony winner for "Onyx"), who somehow exudes a remaining starchiness even when acting. Here, she plays Libby, the spiky wife and business accomplice of Philip Zimbler (Thomas Jay Ryan), an independent art dealer who flips masterpieces to foreign oligarchs for gigantic profits.

Standard Cunningsbury received much acclaim for playing Oubin onstage in the Lincoln Center Theater premieres and later in the 1996 mov...
THEATER REVIEW

Even before the Internet, instant bonding beguiled

By James Hebert
THEATER CRITIC

Back away from the Facebook friends. Look up from that monotonously hypnotic monitor long enough to contemplate how, mere 20 years ago, it actually was not possible to become fickle pats with Madonna or the president-elect just by unconsciously adding.

And then Twitter came this-how is it that a period play—meaning, from the pre-Internet period—can capture with such keen accuracy both that eagerness to form instant bonds with others (particularly those with a whiff of celebrity), and the emptiness that can stem from such ephemeral connections?

John Guare’s “Six Degrees of Separation,” the glibly sardonic comedy now in its San Diego debut at the Old Globe, is on the surface about a particular place and time: mid-1980s on the Upper East Side, the height of the Age of Excess.

But as directed by Trip Cullman with propulsive energy and plenty of dramatic (not to mention Brechtian) vigor, the play is a reminder that long before the whole world was within one mouse-click, say, of Kevin Bacon, there was a deep fascination with the idea of a small world, and a desire to bask in the frisson of being linked to the luminous.

“Six Degrees” delves into other themes: race, identity, sexual politics. Cullman brings us straight into both the period and the mood at the top of the play with the iconic 1980s and a startlingly dumbfounded New Yorker’s “Blue Monday,” as played by Thomas Jay Ryan and his wife, Ouisa (Karen Ziemba)—the art-dealing society couple whose path Paul Dano and Paul Bettany’s “catcher in the rye” is the object of their admiration and actresses who are so dependent on perception as is the price of a painting.

The only people who seem to see through the facade are the couple’s twins and spoiled kids, as well as the children of close friends (played by Donald Sage Mackay and the comically batshit Keller Walsh) who wind up similarly bamboozled by Paul.

The Kittredges feel betrayed when they catch Paul in bed with a hustler at their house; at that moment, Medora/Challion’s charismatic, art-heavy set breaks open to reveal a grittier world of scalfolds and graffiti beyond. The transgression—for both the Kittredges and the audience—is heightened by the way Paul’s scrutiny compels Germaine (Penn Campbell) struts around the place, naked and belligerent.


What he gave them, though, was what they can’t quite forgive. It’s the lurking suspicion that, as Paul’s “Catcher in the Rye” thesis proposes, “Everybody’s a phony.” And not just those who are six degrees removed.
Six Degrees of Separation

Reviewed By: Rob Stevens - Jan 17, 2009 - San Diego

The world has changed tremendously in the nearly two decades since John Guare’s Six Degrees of Separation, now being its given San Diego premiere at the Old Globe Theatre, first touched on the idea of how everyone on the planet -- and not just Kevin Bacon -- is connected to someone else by the thinnest of threads. But time hasn’t blunted the topicality of Guare’s literate play or its fascination with the duality of personality and character, all of which is in evidence in Trip Cullman’s sterling production, acted with panache by a very talented cast led by Tony Award winner Karen Ziemba.

Guare based his play on a real occurrence that took place among wealthy Manhattanites in the early 1980s. Here, fictional art dealer Flan Kittridge (Thomas Jay Ryan) and his stylish wife Ouisa (Ziemba) are entertaining their South African mine owner friend Geoffrey (Tony Tom) -- in the hopes of getting him to invest in their latest acquisition -- when their doorman brings in Paul (Samuel Stricklen) in a star-making performance, a bleeding young black man who claims he was mugged in the park. Paul also claims to be a friend of their children, who are away at Harvard, and has intimate knowledge of the Kittridges. Moreover, he also claims to be the son of actor Sidney Poitier, whom he is meeting in the morning. Unsurprisingly, these star-struck socialites let him into their kitchen and their lives, with ultimately disastrous consequences.

As the work progresses, we discover that Flan and Ouisa aren’t the only ones who were taken in by the charismatic young con man and the chance to be extras in his father’s supposed film version of the musical Cats.

Another wealthy couple and a divorced doctor were also duped by Paul, and a meeting with the Kittridge’s rebellious and very vocal offspring prove how truly gullible the parents are. Equally taken in is Rick (heartbreakingly played by Joaquin Perez-Campbell), a young wanna-be actor from Utah who is taken in by Paul’s story of abandonment and seduced by his charm.

The play, however, ultimately centers on Ouisa’s determination to discover the true identity of this outsider who so touched her life. The puzzle pieces start to fall into place -- even as a few remain missing -- leaving Ouisa a markedly changed person. Ziemba beautifully etches this woman of privilege who slowly comes to realize there is a very different and starkly real world outside her safe ivory tower. As she experiences real emotions and feelings, her pain and helplessness are very palpable.

Cullman’s crisp direction makes the 90-minute play zip by. Andromache Chalfant’s breakaway scenic design contrasts the lushness of the Central Park living quarters and its artworks with the grim reality of the city streets and its graffiti art. Emily Rebholz’s chic costumes, for the matrons as well as for their trendy kids, are well executed, and Ben Stanton has lit everything just beautifully. And the play’s final image of a two-sided Kandinsky painting, which cleverly reinforces Guare’s thesis, is sure to linger long after the curtain drops.
Two decades on, ‘Six Degrees’ still potent at Old Globe

ANNE MARIE WELSH
For the North County Times

Nearly 20 years after its New York premiere, John Guare’s dashing ‘Six Degrees of Separation’ remains funny, provocative, moving — and pleasantly disorienting, at least in the brisk, well-cast staging of a production directed by Trey Callahan and thoughtfully designed by Andromache Chalfant for the Old Globe.

Jump-cutting through time, place and genre, Guare’s comedy enganges a breathtaking array of themes: the role of chance in human destiny, the sadness beneath the hollow smiles of wealthy New Yorkers, the corruption of ideals in the art world, the decline of Broadway into shallow spectacle, the obliviousness of celebrity-seekers rich and poor, the gaps between parents and children, whites and blacks, gits and straight, husbands and wives.

The satiric portions of the play, a late ‘60s update on Tom Wolfe’s ‘Bonfire of the Vanities’ — joking with one-liners that place Guare in the company of such true heavyweights as Oscar Wilde and Noel Coward.

Yet the Globe production also teaches the script’s one heartwarming, a vibration that gives the play its deeper resonance — and its title. In the lead role of Ouaisa Kitteridge, middle-aged white wife of a famous New York art dealer, Tony-winner Karen Ziemba forges a real, wonder-filled bond with Paul, an ethnic black man. She’s come to care more for him than for husband or son because he’s reconstructed her to — for lack of a better word — her soul.

Ziemba plays Ouaisa a little soft and sweet for the early scenes of the play, there the character’s dialogue suggests a brittle, world-wearysolverme as underlining as her anxiety-driven husband. But as the action unfolds, the radiant declarations that were Ziemba a tenor for the dance musical ‘Concert’ again serves her well. With Callahan’s staging and Ben Sexton’s malleable lighting underscoring her warmth, she projects an emotion for Paul that raises the bar to her youthful love for art and for true relationships, uncontaminated by greed. He rekindles her belief in mystery, and she feels again the touch of Michaelangelo’s God.

In those later scenes of the play’s Scenic Joy ride, actor Samuel Strickland creates a

PHOTO: COURTESY OF CRAIG BOIWART

Karen Ziemba, left, and Samuel Strickland in ‘Six Degrees of Separation’ at the Old Globe.

Paul worth knowing — a bright, gay, energetic outsider who had been differently connected, eight have landed far from the River’s Island cell where he’s been incarcerated at play’s end.

Guare took his inspiration for the plot from a real-life hoax perpetrated by David Hamilton, who in 1983 duped his way into the homes of various rich New Yorkers (they’re pictured in the Globe program) by pretending to be a friend of their college-age children. He was convicted and imprisoned for swindling the rest of us — just living ‘band to mouth on a higher plateau’.

When Paul interrupts the meeting of moneybags Geofffrey with Ouais and Flann, the landlubber claims to be a wounded and robbed nearby. Sporting their building, he has turned to the Kitteridges for help because he knows their son and daughter at Harvard. Paul charms the trio with a virtuoso monologue describing his stolen thesis on ‘Catcher in the Rye,” he claims to have devised that as an assimilate modeled themselves on the defiant Holden Caulfield, the Saling hero who spots the fakes and climbers all around him. On and on Paul goes, citing Samuel Beckett’s novel of his enthralling host’s on the ‘death of the imagination.’

> ‘DEGREES,’ 18
and asking, "why has imagination become a synonym for style?"

Strickler's delivery of Paul's monologue lacked conviction on opening night. But it's not so much the intellectual posturing and the taut, improved read that character preaches to seduce these upper East Siders and their billionaire guests. They fall for his claim to be the son of Sidney Poitier because they hope he can get them all cast as extras in the movie version of "Cats."

Screwball complications emerge when friends Larkin (Donald Sage Mackay) and Kitty (Kellita Walsh) arrive with the wonderful news of their similar future in film. The few quick, bold strokes which Guare creates this couple and an array of privileged unhappy children are one of the chief delights of the play — and this production.

Walsh nails the confidently strutting one-upmanship of the obnoxious wealthy Kitty, while Mackay creates an equal absurdity of her tag-along husband — until they learn of Paul's deception. Then, in one swift, brilliantly timed revelation of a possible affair, their relationship breaks hilariously apart.

Other fireworks occur in the younger generation — a gallery of five disaffected youngsters who disapprove of their parents for reasons too numerous to count, from the loss of a pink shirt to deeper matters. Sloan Гreen is positively scary as the raging son of a duped doctor (James Faye). Verna Font is especially good as Lisa, the privileged Kittridge daughter who learns how Paul got his information about his hapless victims — and who demands attention in ever-more outrageous ways from parents who never gave her the right kind of it.

Also strong: Kevin Hoffman as the "contemporary Henry Higgins" who schooled Paul in the care and feeding of the rich, and Joaquin Perez-Campbell, double cast as a nude hustler who fixes Paul's bed and as the innocent Utah transplant who arrives with his girlfriend (Catherine Goul) to pursue Big Apple theatrical dreams.

The young couple's encounter with Paul brings one of those remarkable shifts of tone so stunning for audiences in this and other Guare plays such as "The House of Blue Leaves" and "Landscape of the Body." Though some of the easier jokes in "Six Degrees of Separation" (the roller skating in "Starlight Express," for instance) have become dated, Guare's inventive dramaturgy and singular voice remain fresh as ever.
Characters in ‘Six Degrees’ look for middle ground

BY DIANA SAENGER
Contributor

Since everyone knows Kevin Bacon in 1994 that he knew everyone, the Six Degrees of Separation phenomenon has become a film, game, organization and a play. John Guare’s Obie-winning play “Six Degrees of Separation” takes to the stage Jan. 10 to Feb. 15 at The Old Globe. Directed by Tim Calkins, the play stars Broadway veteran and Tony Award-winning actress Karen Ziemba in the title role of Ouisa.

“Six Degrees” is about the high-class Kittridge family, who lives in New York City and works hard at maintaining their social status. When an injured stranger shows up at their door while they are entertaining and claims to be a friend of one of their children, they let him in. At first they are charmed by this multi-faceted young man, but soon family members are not only questioning who he is, but their own identities and who they are really all about.

UCSD alumna Samuel Stricklen plays the role of the stranger, Paul. His work includes international and national productions as well as La Jolla Playhouse’s “Victor/Victoria.” “Phantom,” “Annie Get Your Gun” and “Tales of the City,” Stricklen understands the challenge he faces as a lead character in what is basically an ensemble piece. “Paul lives in his own world and although everyone around him has their opinion about him, he has no outside eye,” Stricklen said. “He’s very much the antagonist and it’s fascinating to see the effect he has on others. That’s part of the great thing about John Guare, the writer. Because even though the main players — Ouisa (Karen Ziemba), Flan (Thomas Jay Ryan) and Paul — are present, there are so many other characters in this play who may be on stage for only five minutes yet there’s a small play in each of their lines. The writing is that great.”

Working with a large ensemble cast can be challenging for directors, but Stricklen found Calkins quite capable. “He’s one of the most patient directors I’ve worked with and very good at talking with the actors,” Stricklen said. “One of the best things I’ve learned about acting is it’s not about finding things right there in the moment but about discovery, and Tim is open to actors trying things on their own. I really trusted his judgment.”

Stricklen has a good sense of his character, as he appeared in a few episodes of the 2006 TV series “Six Degrees.” Yet he’s still unfiltered by the universal theme of the play.

“It means that no matter where you are, there are five people somehow related to you,” Stricklen said. “I was on Fifth Avenue in New York and eating next to a man who had a 15-year subscription to The Old Globe. He wanted to know all about this show, and we talked for quite a while.”

That universal theme of connection runs through “Six Degrees,” which offers sexual tension as well as some dark moments in the story explores elements of race, class and sexuality. “It’s full of imagination,” said Stricklen. “That’s one of the things I enjoy about my character,” he said. “Paul goes where his imagination takes him in his search for his place in his life. All the characters in the play are trying to find the middle ground in their lives. I think that’s what audiences respond to in this play — to think about their own dreams and aspirations and what they want to do with the rest of their lives.”

Thomas Jay Ryan (Flan), Karen Ziemba (Ouisa) and Samuel Stricklen (Paul) star in The Old Globe’s “Six Degrees of Separation.” Photo: CHAD SCHWABERT.
**Sidney’s Son**

*They aren’t wealthy, a character says, just “hand-to-mouth on a higher plateau.”*

Instead of the American Dream, Upper East Side version. Plans(ders) and (s)udies will be rich enough to bankrupt themselves not only from the outside world, but also, in John Guare’s Six Degrees of Separation, from within. Their imaginations will never threaten them stale.

Enter Paul, a gay, African-American young man, hoisted and bereft. Somehow he made it through apartment security. He broke that social barrier the way Sidney Poitier became the “Jackie Robinson of films.” Poitier, who grew up poor in the Bahamas, net on the shores, Paul tells us, and conjured up “the kind of world that were on the other side” and what he “saw in them.” Paul (contemporary Poitier and Sidney’s Sidney Poitier’s son, is he, or has he become, like Poitier, ways to thrive in other worlds?

Guare based Six Degrees on an actual event. "Somebody sent me a clipping...about a kid named David Hampton, “whose battle was pretending to be Sidney Poitier’s son.” The fiction granted Hampton access to homes he couldn’t enter otherwise and from which he stole abundance. What the Kritikos’s don’t know Poitier had daughters, but no son.

Guare didn’t invent the concept, but like Joseph Heller’s Catch-22, he achieved a popular phrase. According to Poitier, everyone on earth is only six people away from everyone else, “six degrees of separation” between you, me, and Kevin Bacon (a pun), “Six Degrees of Kevin Bacon” based on the concept. (Ouija’s both thrilled by such small-world possibilities and frustrated “because you have to find the right six people to make the connection.”

Paul may not be Poitier’s son, but he become a great actor. He can converse about art with art dealers, prepare a gourmet dish from scratch, and even convince upscale New Yorkers he can land them roles in a film version of Cask — as humans. Throughout Six Degrees, Guare shews Upper East Side cut-throatish, his nastiest shot — an image of Cask has no human roles — shows them easily duped and too-deep shallow. They aren’t wealthy, a character says, just “hand-to-mouth on a higher plateau.”

A Pygmalion-like friend taught Paul how to pass as upper class. It only took Paul three months to become “the most outrageously masked young man in the East.” Although he’s a quick study/agent, Paul’s trapped too. He can only gain acceptance as someone else.

At the Old Globe, even when you know that Paul’s a friend, Stephen Spinella plays him well enough to make you wonder if Sidney Poitier might have had a illegitimate son. Guare stuffs Paul’s dialogue with lectures — about the imagination, drama’s emotionally “paralyzed” characters, a Potlair’s brio, violence in Salinger’s Catcher in the Rye. Spinella handles these lengthy passages without becoming preachy (too much first). His best work comes when Paul connects to the sixth degree and the real Paul peeks through the mask.

Guare said Six Degrees should move like the wind. Though his early scenes threaten to crack the second barrier, director Trip Cullman shows a good sense of the play’s collage-like form — comedy, farce, intellectual, direct address, dreams, each tumbling out of the other — and how to bring the script’s 17 characters, most of them stand-and-deliver characters, to life, especially Poitier and Ouija’s three (and other-plated-alienated) children.

The Kritikos painting, which hovers over the scene throughout, has two sides on one, Rubik’s cube formality; the other, says Guare, "wild and vivid" Thomas was Ryan’s conceptual Penn, who tries to keep things "abstract," is side one: controlled, formal, with the reality-avoidance instincts of an ostrich. Karen Ziemba’s open, vulnerable Ouija’s side two (reflected in Emily Reiko’s color-based costumes). As the play progresses, and Ouija’s understanding grows, Ziemba traces a touching arc from a wide-eyed comic character to near-traumatic awareness.

Anderschi’s Chaffin’s art starts out pop — the Kritikos’s art-rich apartment, with stained living room downstage — then separates, exposing Paul’s world of graffiti on grimy-gray concrete. Large sliding doors make the set resemble a fortress, though not as impenetrable as Paul would prefer.

Like the Kritikos painting, the play’s title sums two ways. By the end the characters aren’t just six degrees away from potential soul mates; except for Paul and Ouija, they’re at least that far removed from their aesthetic selves.
San Diego Arts

'Six Degrees of Separation' at The Old Globe

[insert Kevin Bacon joke here]

By Jennifer Chung Kiam
Posted on Sun, Jan 18th, 2009
Last updated Sun, Jan 18th, 2009

One of the strange incongruities of 21st century life is that we have simultaneously become more and less connected with each other. We send instant messages to the coworker in the neighboring cubicle. We have 1,273 “friends” in Facebook but few quality relationships. We Twitter the minutia of our daily lives into the ether, and hide behind avatars in the online world.

A lot has changed in the intervening years since John Guare penned “Six Degrees of Separation” in 1990, pre-Google and pre-IMDB. The playwright presciently tapped into contemporary issues of identity and connectedness in an increasingly shrinking yet impersonal world. The play spawned a film starring Will Smith and, more famously, the Six Degrees of Kevin Bacon game. Even if the Globe’s current staging doesn’t quite fill out the characters and their enigmatic and sometimes exasperating relationships, it still boasts a strong cast in a striking and engaging production.

The play’s title refers to the social theory that suggests “everybody on this planet is separated by only six other people,” according to one character. Guare based the play on actual events that took place in the early 1980s, when a charismatic young black man conned his way into the homes and lives of affluent New Yorkers.

In “Six Degrees,” art dealer Flan Kittredge and his wife Ouisa are entertaining their ridiculously wealthy South African friend (Tony Torn), from whom they are also trying to extract $2 million for an art deal.

Then Paul stumbles into their home with a bloody shirt and a story about being mugged in Central Park. The Kittredges quickly sympathize and are soon smitten by their young guest, who helps them lock in the $2 mil and connects with them in a way their own children have not.

Paul claims not only to be the son of Sidney Poitier, but to know their kids as a fellow student at Harvard. As it turns out, the Kittredges are just the latest to be taken in by Paul’s charm and the possibility of being an extra in the movie version of the musical “Cats.”

Samuel Stricklen’s Paul captivates his well-heeled targets (and the audience) with personal stories of Poitier, a dissertation on the importance of imagination, and his thesis on why the J.D. Salinger novel “Catcher in the Rye” became a manifesto for assassins of celebrities. Stricklen exhibits the character’s duality, exuding charisma and poise but also betraying a calculating nature and mental instability.
The play ultimately focuses on Ouisa, who allows herself to be affected by the experience in a way that the others — shallow, ego-centric, money-grubbing “starfuckers” — do not. Through Paul she sees the emptiness falseness of her own life, and she resists turning him into an amusing dinner anecdote. Tony Award-winner Karen Ziemba deftly delineates Ouisa’s emotional arc, from ideal trophy wife hostess to recognizing the pretenses that inform her life.

Thomas Jay Ryan is glibly unaffected as Flan. Joaquin Perez-Campbell plays a naïve newcomer from Utah who gets seduced and robbed, while Catherine Gowl plays his wary girlfriend. Actors from the Globe and USD’s training program play the privileged college kids, overstating the melancholy self-importance of youth, often humorously if unrealistically.

The music — including New Order’s “Blue Monday” and the, well, aptly titled “Master and Servant” by Depeche Mode — hints at the 1980 setting, while costumes also capture the alternately garish and bland looks of the ’80s.

The theme of duality is suggested most overtly in the double-sided Wassily Kandinsky painting — one side a dark canvas of geometric shapes, the other wildly splashed with vibrant colors. Andromache Chalfant’s set cracks open Flan and Ouisa’s well-manicured and sterile apartment to reveal a gritty street scene just outside.

Trip Cullman’s snappy direction speeds through the play’s 90 minutes of literature, art and sociology, and may leave some audiences yearning for a breath, or deeper characterizations. But perhaps it makes sense for a play about shifting identities and tenuous human connections not to linger or delve too deeply.

**Dates**: Tues.-Sun., through Feb. 15

**Organization**: The Old Globe

**Phone**: 619-23-GLOBE

**Production Type**: Play

**Region**: Balboa Park

**URL**: http://www.theoldglobe.org

**Venue**: Old Globe Theatre, Balboa Park, San Diego

*About the author*: Jennifer Chung Klam is an editor at The Daily Transcript and a freelance arts and culture writer.

More by this author.

---

**Share this article**

by e-mail · del.icio.us · digg this · stumbleupon · reddit · spurl

**Subscribe to Arts**

---

**Comments**

Be the first to comment on this article.

**Write Comment**

Your Name (required):

Your E-Mail (optional):

Pop quiz: What is 77 plus 2?

Your comment

---
Globe's 'Six Degrees' sheds light on identity through art

Theater Review
By Jenna Long

SAN DIEGO — In our present reality of Bernie Madoff stealing investors' fortunes and lay-offs forcing some middle-class families to line up at food banks, a play about characters who identify themselves by financial worth and social status seems as relevant today as it was in 1986, when the story takes place.

"Six Degrees of Separation" — now playing at the Old Globe Theatre — is based on the real-life story of David Hampton, a con man who posed as Sidney Poitier's son to receive lodging and short-lived friendships from vapid New York socialites.

Paul (Samuel Stricklen) quickly wins the hearts and attention of Ouisa and Flan Kittredge (Karen Ziemba and Thomas Jay Ryan) and by claiming he knows their children — acknowledged, of course, by their Harvard education — because the Kittredges have no personal link to their offspring but blood and money. Really, it seems the only bond the couple has between themselves is money; the single minimally-intimate moment they share comes on the heels of acquiring $2 million for an art deal.

Andromache Chalfant's visually appealing set cleverly represents superficial wealth with an array of bright, expensive art that largely consists of one- and two-tone paintings, which seem more functional for filling wall space than provoking inspiration.

Ironically, the two paintings of real value to the Kittredges are a watercolor of their dog — the only piece not facing outward as a status symbol — and a two-sided Kandinsky masterpiece looming overhead, representing the play's themes of identity and duality.

"There are two sides to every story," James Eckhouse's Dr. Fine explains to his son Doug (Sloan Grenz), who performs the most humorous outburst of the show in expressing his parental hatred.

Ziemba's Ouisa does a poignant job of displaying her own duality — shifting from a hilariously manic hostess to a restless dreamer who starts to imagine a more fulfilling life because of what Paul has shown her.

Ryan's Flan and Stricklen's Paul are played so compellingly, the audience might leave...

See Theater Review on 4A.

Theater Review
Continued from Page 3A

wondering who's the real fraud: Paul, a pseudo-chameleon of identities, readily admits that he believes "the imagination is merely another phrase for what is most uniquely us," while Flan, the emotionally-detached art dealer, claims he "felt so close to the paintings," perhaps because he shares their flashy exterior with nothing of substance underneath the facade.

"Six Degrees" is mostly enjoyable because the script is filled with meaningful, engaging dialogue delivered by well-cast actors who quickly win and hold the audience's attention for an ideal 90-minute length. The subject matter stays fresh and moves quickly, thanks to Trip Cullman's talented direction, with just the right amount of time for viewers to get wrapped up in a good story and then get out before it gets old.

In making its points, the production goes slightly overboard with in-your-face symbolism — as when Paul and the two-sided Kandinsky painting simultaneously rotate. But then again, these alter egos are vital in representing the themes of chaos and control that flow throughout the play — as identity becomes not who you are, but what you can get people to believe.

"Six Degrees of Separation" is playing through Feb. 15 at the Old Globe Theatre.

jenna.long@sdut.com
Source Code: 20090129tbk
'Six Degrees': from stage to film to stage

By CHARLENE BALDRIDGE | VILLAGE NEWS

Currently on San Diego stages are two plays by masterful living playwrights John Guare and John Patrick Shanley. Both plays were made into highly successful films, one of them (Shanley's "Doubt") an obvious Oscar contender playing in local cinemas.

Seen at the Old Globe the evening of Jan. 17, Guare's "Six Degrees of Separation" resonates differently but no less mightily than it did when seen nearly two decades ago on stage and screen. The 1990 Broadway play led to a 1993 film that first brought young sitcom star Will Smith to serious public attention.

The core metaphor of this dense 90-minute roller coaster of a play, staged here by Trip Cullman in his Globe directorial debut, is contained in the last words spoken by protagonist Ouisa Kittredge about the Kandinsky work that hangs in her posh New York apartment: "The Kandinsky ... it's painted on two sides." Though no solutions to any of the mysteries presented in the play are spelled out, this line ties up everything neatly. Just as the Kandinsky has two sides, so do human beings.

The other key in the Globe's dazzling production is handed over by Andromache Chalfant's astonishing scenic design, which opens up, as a dream might, to reveal unexplored vistas that could represent possibilities for a less proscribed and plastic life for the awakened protagonist, Ouisa Kittredge.

Ouisa (the magnificent Karen Ziemba) is married to Paul (Thomas Jay Ryan), an art dealer who specializes in selling privately owned masterworks out of their fancy Manhattan living room. A wealthy South African client (Tory Torn) arrives for pre-dinner cocktails when suddenly the bleeding and shaken Paul arrives. He is portrayed by UCSD MFA graduate Samuel Stricklen, remembered in numerous UCSD productions, including Darko Tresnjak's "La Dispute."

Paul, who gets more and more intriguing, is a young African-

SEE 'SIX DEGREES,' Page 12
SIX DEGREES
CONTINUED FROM PAGE 10

American who says he was victimized in a Central Park mugging in which he lost his luggage and his wallet. He claims to be a Harvard classmate of the Kittredges' children and furthermore, the son of Sidney Poitier, whom he is to meet the next morning for breakfast.

Obviously of high intelligence, Paul cooks a gourmet meal for the trio of sophisticates. He speaks intelligently of artists and then delivers a heady theoretical discourse about the novel "Catcher in the Rye." Of course Paul is invited to stay overnight. The illusion is shattered the next morning when Ouisa discovers him with a naked male prostitute (beautiful Joaquin Perez-Campbell, seen recently, but not so completely, in "Back Back Back").

The Kittredges are not the only ones in their smart set duped by Paul, hence the "six degrees of separation" comparison. Over the course of the play, in direct address and in played-out scenes, the audience learns that all is not as it appears in marital and parent-child relationships, hence the duality represented by the Kandinsky, which is geometrical on one side and chaotic on the other. The ensemble of young and older people is quite impressive, as are the three leads, but it's the set that accompanies one home.

"Six Degrees of Separation" continues through Feb. 15 at the Old Globe in Balboa Park. For tickets and information, visit www.theoldglobe.org or call (619) 23-GLOBE. □
Family matter

GLOBE'S SIX DEGREES NEEDS A SLIGHTLY SCIENTIFIC TOUCH, BUT IT'S PRETTY GOOD

BY MARTIN JONES WESTLIN

The wife of the man who once stood a nasty cough away from the presidency has said she found something incredible in compiling family research for a memoir. Lynne Cheney told MSNBC in late 2007 that she'd learned her husband and the current president are eighth cousins, calling the discovery "such an amazing American story, that one ancestor... could be responsible for family lines for lives that have taken such different and varied paths as Dick's and Barack Obama." Further research reportedly shows that Obama and ex-President Bush are distantly related, as well. From this end, both instances serve as incontrovertible evidence that man is indeed descended from a bunch of frickin' apes.

I was reminded of that inherent truth upon seeing Six Degrees of Separation, John Guare's take on the idea that person A is connected to person B by a trail of six people at most, assuming that the two persons don't know each other. The theory dates to 1967 and has spawned lots of grass-roots interest, with Guare's 1990 play and the movie three years later at the heart of the phrase's popularity. The Old Globe Theatre liked the idea so much that it thought it'd have a go at things—and while I don't think the script includes enough social science to help establish a foundation, I eagerly give it up for Trip Cullman's crisp direction. Amid the madcap nature of it all, this show could dissolve into a parody of itself, but Cullman's deliberate hand keeps things readable, aboveboard and pretty damn quirky all night long.

The wayward Paul (Samuel Strickland) is about to become an insider in an artsy-fartsy New York family, showing up at its doorstep injured and asking for help. He regales filthy-rich New York art dealers Ouisa and Flan Kittredge (Tony winner Karen Ziemba and Thomas Jay Ryan) with persuasive tales of his past, specifically those about his famous father. But pretty soon, the stories diverge and lead everybody involved to doubt his identity, along with their own. Our lowborn sense of ourselves, it seems, leads us to create a rash of false identities and games to elevate our standing in others' eyes.

Such farce, Guare seems to say, is no match for our closeness and the dilemmas it creates—as one character says, it's "like Chinese water torture that we're so close, because you have to find the right six people to make the right connection." Guare introduces a parade of people to that end, with Cullman holding sway over every nuance. Hard to believe we're so interconnected amid such a motley illustration of personalities, but Cullman's solid grasp on each makes us want to believe it, and Guare's deft reflections take it from there.

While the six-degrees theory has never been proven, its clinical origins have fueled a certain curiosity in pop culture (actor Kevin Bacon even launched a website, SixDegrees.org, advancing the concept of our interrelatedness in the name of charity). Guare chooses to forgo that link to science; the characters might have been better defined if he'd somehow included it in their reflections. As such, there's a certain "gee-whiz" color at some intervals that call for quiet sobriety.

But Ziemba and Ryan are at their best, and Andromache Chalfant's set is an exemplary blend of the conceptual and the real. The social scientist in me wanted more out of this, but his actor-director counterpart liked it just fine.


Write to marty@sdcitybeat.com and editor@sdcitybeat.com.
CRITIC'S CHOICE

"Six Degrees of Separation" Six Degrees of Separation. John Guare's twitchy, deeply layered 1990 comedy gets its San Diego premiere in high style under Trip Cullman's direction at the Globe. Tony-winner Karen Ziemba strikes the right blend of humor and regret as Ouisa, who, along with her art-dealer husband, played by Thomas Jay Ryan, has taken in a young man (Samuel Strickland) claiming to be the son of Sidney Poitier. It's a con, but the clash of these characters' worlds yields fascinating (and funny) commentary on identity, race and art. (James Hebert) The Old Globe, 1363 Old Globe Way, Balboa Park. Through Feb. 18. 619-234-5623, theoldglobe.org. $29-$66.


"The Dresser" "The Dresser." Ronald Harwood's bittersweet backstage portrait of a London theater during the Blitz has an ace cast to match David Hare's sensitive direction. The matchless Jonathan McMurtry plays a proud but faltering Shakespearean actor, and Sean Sullivan is his fervently loyal dresser. It's a funny, affecting and understated production, with some of the best acting you'll see on local stages. (Hebert) North Coast Repertory Theatre, 987 Lomas Santa Fe Drive, Solana Beach. Through Feb. 8, 858-481-1055, northcoastrep.org. $23-$45.
Theater News

Karen Ziemba to Star in Old Globe's Six Degrees of Separation

By: Brian Scott Lipton · Dec 8, 2008 · San Diego

Tony Award winner Karen Ziemba will play Ouisa Kittredge in the Old Globe's production of John Guare's Six Degrees of Separation to run January 10-February 15. The production, which will open officially on January 15, will be directed by Trip Cullman.

In the play, the Kittredges, an Upper East Side couple, find a young man claiming to be a college friend of their children at their front door injured and asking for help. As their involvement with him takes unexpected twists and turns, they begin to question not only his identity but their own.

The cast features Thomas Jay Ryan (Flan), Donald Sage Mackay (Larkin), Keliher Walsh (Kitty), Tony Torn (Geoffrey), Samuel Stricklen (Paul), James Eckhouse (Dr. Fine), Joaquin Perez-Campbell (Rick/Hustler), Catherine Gowl (Elizabeth), Kevin Hoffmann (Ben), Sloan Grenz (Doug), Jordan McArthur (Woody), Andrew Dahl (Trent), Vivia Font (Tess), and Steven Marzolf (Doorman/Policeman/Detective). The creative team includes Andromache Chalfant (sets), Emily Rebholz (costumes), Ben Stanton (lighting), and Paul Peterson (sound).

Ziemba won the Tony Award for her performance in Contact and received Tony nominations for Steel Pier, Never Gonna Dance, and Curtains. Her other Broadway credits include Chicago, Crazy For You, Teddy & Alice, and 42nd Street.

For tickets and information, call 619-23-GLOBE or visit www.TheOldGlobe.org.
Tony-Winner Ziemba Leads Cast for Guare's 'Six Degrees of Separation'

by BWW News Desk

The Tony Award-winning Old Globe presents the Pulitzer Prize-winning Six Degrees of Separation by John Guare (The House of Blue Leaves, Landscape of the Body), directed by Trip Cullman, to run in the Old Globe Theatre January 10 - February 15 (press opening: Thursday, January 15 at 8pm). Broadway veteran Karen Ziemba, who will play "Ouisa," won the Tony for the musical Contact and was nominated for her work in Steel Pier, Never Gonna Dance and Curtains!. Tickets are available by calling (619) 23-GLOBE, online at www.TheOldGlobe.org, or by visiting the Globe Box Office at 1363 Old Globe Way in Balboa Park.

The Kittredges' lives revolve around the high-stakes world of the New York art scene, where the appearance of success is everything. One evening as they are entertaining at their Upper East Side home, a young man claiming to be a college friend of their children shows up at their front door injured and asking for help. He is a charming young man who enchants the couple with a home-cooked gourmet meal and regales them with stories of his famous father. As their involvement with him takes unexpected twists and turns, they begin to question not only his identity but their own. A hit on Broadway that became an acclaimed motion picture with Will Smith, Stockard Channing, and Donald Sutherland, this intriguing play probes the allure of celebrity and the games we play to elevate our own significance.

Jordan McArthur as "Woody," Andrew Dahl as "Trent," Vivia Font as "Tess" and Steven Marzolf as "Doorman/Policeman/Detective."

The creative team includes Trip Cullman, director; Andromache Chalfant, scenic design; Emily Rebholz, costume design; Ben Stanton, lighting design; Paul Peterson, sound design; Diana Moser, stage manager.

John Guare (Playwright) is the Obie and New York Drama Critics Circle Award-winning playwright of such plays as House of Blue Leaves, Six Degrees of Separation (which won London's Olivier Award as Best Play and for which he also wrote the screenplay), Landscape of the Body, A Few Stout Individuals, as well as his Oscar-nominated screenplay for Louis Malle's Atlantic City. He won a Tony for his libretto to the musical Two Gentlemen of Verona and was nominated for a Tony for his play Four Baboons Adoring the Sun and his libretto to Sweet Smell of Success. His adaptation of His Girl Friday premiered to great acclaim at London's National Theater. He co-edits the Lincoln Center Theater Review, teaches playwriting at Yale School of Drama, is a council member of the Dramatists Guild, a trustee of PEN America and received the 2004 Gold Medal in Drama from the American Academy of Arts and Letters. The NYShakespeare Festival/Public Theater will produce his new play, A Free Man of Color, next season.

Trip Cullman (Director: Six Degrees of Separation) most recently directed South Coast Repertory's critically-acclaimed world premiere of Richard Greenberg's The Injured Party. He has directed numerous acclaimed off-Broadway plays, including The Drunken City and Manic Flight Reaction at Playwrights Horizons, Terrence McNally's Some Men at Second Stage Theatre, The Wooden Breeks at the Lucille Lortel Theatre; Dog Sees God and Last Sunday in June at Century Center for the Performing Arts, and Roulette at the John Houseman Theatre. His regional credits include The Peterson's Project and Keith Huff's A Steady Rain at New York Stage & Film, and Lauren Weedman's Rash at the Empty Space Theatre, Seattle. Cullman trained at the Yale School of Drama and is an Associate Artist at The Play Company.

Karen Ziemba is making her debut at The Old Globe. ELSEWHERE: Much Ado About Nothing, Shakespeare Theatre, D.C./Hartford Stage; House And Garden, Geva Theatre; Leading Ladies, Ford's Theatre; The Three Penny Opera, Williamstown Theatre Festival; The Opposite Of Sex, Magic Theatre. Broadway: Contact, (Tony, Drama Desk, Outer Critics Circle Awards); Curtains (Outer Critics Circle Award, Tony Nom.); Never Gonna Dance (Outer Critics Circle Award, Tony Nom.); Steel Pier (Tony Nom.), Chicago, Crazy For You, A Chorus Line, 42nd Street. Off-Broadway: And The World Goes 'Round (Drama Desk Award), I Do! I Do! (Drama Desk Nom.). New York City Opera: 110 In The Shade, The Most Happy Fella. TV & Film: The Producers, Scrubs, all three Law & Order series, The Kennedy Center Honors, and for PBS, My Favorite Broadway: The Leading Ladies, Gershwin At 100 and Stephen Sondheim: A Celebration At Carnegie Hall.
Tony Winner Karen Ziemba to Star in Six Degrees at Old Globe

By Kenneth Jones
10 Dec 2008

Broadway's Karen Ziemba will play Ouisa, the rich New Yorker who is uniquely touched by a con man who insinuates himself into her circle, in the new Old Globe Theatre production of John Guare’s Six Degrees of Separation.

Trip Cullman directs the revival, playing Jan. 10-Feb. 15, 2009, in San Diego. Opening night is Jan. 15. Ziemba won the Tony Award for her performance in the musical Contact and was nominated for her work in Steel Pier, Never Gonna Dance and Curtains.

In Six Degrees, according to Old Globe, "the Kittredges' lives revolve around the high-stakes world of the New York art scene, where the appearance of success is everything. One evening as they are entertaining at their Upper East Side home, a young man claiming to be a college friend of their children shows up at their front door injured and asking for help. He is a charming young man who enchants the couple with a home-cooked gourmet meal and regales them with stories of his famous father. As their involvement with him takes unexpected twists and turns, they begin to question not only his identity but their own. A hit on Broadway that became an acclaimed motion picture with Will Smith, Stockard Channing, and Donald Sutherland, this intriguing play probes the allure of celebrity and the games we play to elevate our own significance."
The cast also features Thomas Jay Ryan as Flan, Donald Sage Mackay as Larkin, Kelliher Walsh as Kitty, Tony Torn as Geoffrey, Samuel Stricklen as Paul, James Eckhouse as Dr. Fine, Joaquin Perez-Campbell as Rick/Hustler, Catherine Gowi as Elizabeth, Kevin Hoffmann as Ben, Sloan Grenz as Doug, Jordan McArthur as Woody, Andrew Dahl as Trent, Vivia Font as Tess and Steven Marzolf as Doorman/Policeman/Detective.

The creative team includes Andromache Chalfant (scenic design); Emily Rebholz (costume design); Ben Stanton (lighting design); Paul Peterson (sound design); and Diana Moser (stage manager).

Guare is the Obie and New York Drama Critics Circle Award-winning playwright of such plays as House of Blue Leaves, Six Degrees of Separation (which won London’s Olivier Award as Best Play and for which he also wrote the screenplay), Landscape of the Body, A Few Stout Individuals, as well as his Oscar-nominated screenplay for Louis Malle’s “Atlantic City.” He won a Tony for his libretto to the musical Two Gentlemen of Verona and was nominated for a Tony for his play Four Baboons Adoring the Sun and his libretto to Sweet Smell of Success. His adaptation of His Girl Friday premiered to great acclaim at London’s National Theater. The New York Shakespeare Festival/Public Theater will produce his new play, A Free Man of Color, next season.

Cullman most recently directed South Coast Repertory’s critically acclaimed world premiere of Richard Greenberg’s The Injured Party. He has directed numerous Off-Broadway plays, including The Drunken City and Manic Flight Reaction at Playwrights Horizons, Terrence McNally’s Some Men at Second Stage Theatre, The Wooden Breeks at the Lucille Lortel Theatre; Dog Sees God and Last Sunday in June at Century Center for the Performing Arts.

For tickets and more information call (619) 23-GLOBE or visit www.TheOldGlobe.org.
Ziembas Stars in Six Degrees of Separation

Photo by Craig Schwartz

Mel Brooks Kerry Butler David Hyde Pierce
Bette Midler James Earl Jones Kelli O'Hara

8 Performances Only!
March 10 – 15
Ziemba Stars in *Six Degrees of Separation*

Previous Photo  2 / 5  Next Photo

Karen Ziemba and Samuel Stricklen

Photo by Craig Schwartz
Ziembas Stars in *Six Degrees of Separation*


Karen Ziembas
Photo by Craig Schwartz

**Winter Clearance Sale**

Contact Us | Advertise | Privacy Policy

Send questions and comments to the Webmaster
Copyright © 2009 Playbill, Inc. All Rights Reserved.

Melissa Barak: A Return to NYC
André Previn: A Less Ordinary

Click here for more classical music, opera
Ziemba Stars in *Six Degrees of Separation*

Karen Ziemba and Thomas Jay Ryan

Photo by Craig Schwartz

Mel Brooks  Kerry Butler  David Hyde Pierce  Bette Midler  James Earl Jones  Kelli O'Hara

Send questions and comments to the Webmaster
Copyright © 2008 Playbill, Inc. All Rights Reserved.
Ziembas Stars in *Six Degrees of Separation*

Previous Photo 5 / 5  Return to 1st Photo

The cast of *Six Degrees of Separation*
Photo by Craig Schwartz

Contact Us | Advertise | Privacy Policy

Send questions and comments to the Webmaster
Copyright © 2008 Playbill, Inc. All Rights Reserved.

Old Globe's Six Degrees of Separation, With Ziemba, Opens Jan. 15

By Kenneth Jones
15 Jan 2009

Broadway's Karen Ziemba is Ouisa, the rich New Yorker who is uniquely touched by a young con man who insinuates himself into her circle, in the Old Globe Theatre production of John Guare's Six Degrees of Separation, opening Jan. 15 after previews from Jan. 10 in San Diego.

Trip Cullman directs the revival, playing to Feb. 15. Ziemba won the Tony Award for her performance in the musical Contact and was nominated for her work in Steel Pier, Never Gonna Dance and Curtains.

* 

In Six Degrees, according to Old Globe, 'the Kittredges' lives revolve around the high-stakes world of the New York art scene, where the appearance of success is everything. One evening as they are entertaining at their Upper East Side home, a young man [played by Samuel Stricklen] claiming to be a college friend of their children shows up at their front door injured and asking for help. He is a charming young man who enchants the couple with a home-cooked gourmet meal and regales them with stories of his famous father. As their involvement with him takes unexpected twists and turns,
they begin to question not only his identity but their own. A hit on Broadway that became an acclaimed motion picture with Will Smith, Stockard Channing, and Donald Sutherland, this intriguing play probes the allure of celebrity and the games we play to elevate our own significance."

The cast also features Thomas Jay Ryan as Quisa's husband Flan, Donald Sage Mackay as Larkin, Keliher Walsh as Kitty, Tony Torn as Geoffrey, Samuel Stricklen as Paul, James Eckhouse as Dr. Fine, Joaquin Perez-Campbell as Rick/Hustler, Catherine Gowl as Elizabeth, Kevin Hoffmann as Ben, Sloan Grenz as Doug, Jordan McArthur as Woody, Andrew Dahl as Trent, Vivia Font as Tess and Steven Marzolf as Doorman/Policeman/Detective.

* 

The creative team includes Andromache Chaifant (scenic design); Emily Rebolz (costume design); Ben Stanton (lighting design); Paul Peterson (sound design); and Diana Moser (stage manager).

Guare is the Obie and New York Drama Critics Circle Award-winning playwright of such plays as House of Blue Leaves, Six Degrees of Separation (which won London's Olivier Award as Best Play and for which he also wrote the screenplay), Landscape of the Body, A Few Stout Individuals, as well as his Oscar-nominated screenplay for Louis Malle's "Atlantic City." He won a Tony for his libretto to the musical Two Gentlemen of Verona and was nominated for a Tony for his play Four Baboons Adoring the Sun and his libretto to Sweet Smell of Success. His adaptation of His Girl Friday premiered to great acclaim at London's National Theater. The New York Shakespeare Festival/Public Theater will produce his new play, A Free Man of Color, next season.

Cullman most recently directed South Coast Repertory's critically acclaimed world premiere of Richard Greenberg's The Injured Party. He has directed numerous Off-Broadway plays, including The Drunken City and Manic Flight Reaction at Playwrights Horizons, Terrence McNally's Some Men at Second Stage Theatre, The Wooden Brookes at the Lucille Lortel Theatre; Dog Sees God and Last Sunday in June at Century Center for the Performing Arts.

For tickets and more information call (619) 23-GLOBE or visit www.TheOldGlobe.org.
'SIX DEGREES OF SEPARATION' Nominated for a Pulitzer Prize, John Guare's provocative play earned four Tony nominations. This tale of affluence and deception stars Karen Ziemba and is directed by Trip Cullman. It runs through Feb. 15 at the Old Globe in Balboa Park. Tickets are $29-$66. Craig Schwartz
The Identity and Imagination of Six Degrees of Separation

I am four degrees of separation from Albert Einstein (You see, my friend [1] her father [2], well, his friend [3] knew Einstein personally [4]). And I feel only one degree of separation from our newly inaugurated President. I mean, I get e-mails with a subject line that says from Barack Obama. (The campaign has such good marketing!) So, the concept of Six Degrees of Separation isn’t so electrifying as it was during its 1990 Broadway premiere—you know, before e-mail and Facebook, Wikipedia and even most cell phones.

But because the "It's A Small World" theme isn’t such a new revelation, we can look beyond it, to find other gems in playwright John Guare’s work. And as Director Trip Cullman knows, there is a gold mine.

Thanks to strong characterization by Samuel Stricklen ("Paul"), the more prominent themes for our post-Internet world become identity and imagination. Through Stricklen’s performance, Six Degrees of Separation asks audiences: Who do you imagine yourself to be? And is there a point, when, if you believe in your imagination enough, it becomes true? The old you disappears? (Hey Internet junkies: Keep trying on new identities. Just build your character and attend a virtual party!)

At the same time, Tony Award winner Karen Ziemba’s stunning performance as Ouisa shows us there is an extreme beauty in entering someone else’s imaginary world, a beautiful madness. And then, how exciting her life became when she discovered his facade. All of their lives became consumed, as they went on a quest to discover, who is he really?

As is often the case, the Old Globe’s quality of sets, costuming and casting is outstanding. I also appreciated the play’s witty references to pop culture, classic literature and art. And if you are a fan of the original 90210, then check out Brenda and Brandon’s dad in the role of “Dr. Fine” (James Eckhouse).

I did have one issue toward the middle of the play. (Here’s where my wife says, “You are such a lesbian-activist!”) But personally I was annoyed that “Paul,” the law-breaking con-artist just had to be 1. black and then 2. “caught” as a promiscuous gay. And point blank, I’m tired of the LGBT community and communities of color being linked to law-breaking. The story would have worked just as well if “Paul” had been a white hetero girl who knocked on the Kittredge’s New York penthouse door. Although it’s possible she would not have been as snappy a dresser. So, see the play and when you do, try to identify and imagine “Paul” as any young college student. Six Degrees’ themes have the ability to transcend gender and race.

SIX DEGREES OF SEPARATION
The Old Globe Theatre
Now playing through February 15
Box Office 619.234.5023
Six Degrees of Separation
glows at the Old Globe


The creative team includes Trip Cullman, director; Andromache Chalfant, scenic design; Emily Rebholz, costume design; Ben Stanton, lighting design; Paul Peterson, sound design; Diana Moser, stage manager.

If You Go — Six Degrees of Separation
at the Old Globe, 1363 Old Globe Way in Balboa Park, January 10—February 15. Call 619 23.GLOBE, or go online at TheOldGlobe.org or by visiting the Globe box office.

From left, Thomas Jay Ryan as “Tian,” Karen Ziemba as “Ouisa” and Samuel Stricklen as “Paul” in The Old Globe’s production of Six Degrees Of Separation. Photo by Craig Schwartz.
TUESDAY JANUARY 13

Six Degrees of Separation
at the Old Globe

A hit on Broadway that became an acclaimed motion picture with Will Smith, Stockard Channing and Donald Sutherland, this intriguing play probes the allure of celebrity and the games we play to elevate our own significance. Beginning at 7 pm. For more information call 619. 234.5623 or go to theoldglobe.org.
ring in the new year with a fresh round of entertainment

It's a brand new year, and there's a new slate of theatrical offerings on the horizon. January marks the return of the San Diego Opera, and this year the company has a solid gold season to follow last year's triumph. The San Diego Symphony is launching its Beethoven Festival this month, and many of the theater groups in town are shifting into high gear. The Old Globe conjures "Six Degrees of Separation" for its Main Stage and "Since Africa" for its second stage at the San Diego Museum of Art. North Coast Rep revives "The Drowsy Chaperone," and Cygnet Theatre presents the Southern California premiere of "Love Song," just to name a few of the exciting plays helping to ring in the new year.

The San Diego Opera moves back to the Civic Theatre Jan. 24 with its opening season opener, Puccini's "Force." Opening night will kick off with a pre-opera dinner for major supporters, dubbed "Palazzo Promenade," in keeping with "Force's" Italian theme. After dinner at the US Grant Hotel, guests will head to the Civic to see "Force," featuring dynamic Sylvie Velazquez and Marcus Haddock in leading roles. Then it's back to the Grant for the post-opera gala. If you can't make the big bash, you can still see "Force," a stirring dramatic opera steeped in sex, politics, corruption and violence, through Feb. 6. Robert E. Molz will conduct. The rest of the opera season offers plenty of dramatic thrust and musical highlights: "Don Quixote" (but see below) in 1969 will bow in on Feb. 14 for a run through Feb. 22. This new San Diego Opera production stars Francesco Piacesiro and Etienne Gravett and will be conducted by local favorite Karen Keltner. According to Artistic Director Ian Campbell, "This may be the sleeper of the season."

"Rigoletto" is due March 28-April 8. The Verdi masterpiece, with its hit parade of operatic tunes, will feature Lando Attanasio (one of the world's top baritones) in the title role. Benjamin Britten's "Peter Grimes" returns from a long absence April 18 - 26. John Copley will direct this staging, with the remarkable Anthony Dean Griffey in the signature role as the doomed fisherman.

"Madama Butterfly" (one of the best loved operas in the repertoire) will take at the Civic May 9-17,
The "Six Degrees of Separation" comes to the Old Globe beginning Jan. 16.

On Jan. 14, the venue changes to Qualcomm Hall for a Beethoven recital starring Thayer on violin and Maestro Ling on piano, along with Violinist Juan Yeo, cellist Yao Zhou, and pianist McDermott. The existing program features Violin Sonata No. 3 in E major (Opus 24, Spring), Piano Sonata No. 14 in C-sharp minor (Moonlight), and Archibald T. Op. 97 in B-flat major. What a surprise for Beethoven aficionados.

Winter Paint has another treat in store for Symphony audiences (although the orchestras does not perform for this). On Jan. 25, the National Acrobat of China will

take over Symphony Hall for their unique brand of graceful acrobatics and spectacle.

The Old Globe's Main Stage is playing "Six Degrees of Separation" for a Jan. 10 opening. The contemporary masterpiece is about an Upper East Side couple and their charming (but unloved) guests. The fascinating plot is full of twists and turns that become more and more disconcerting as the three characters play runs in course. "Six Degrees" abounds with intriguing human insights, but it's definitely aimed at mature audiences.

The Globe's Arena Stage at the Museum of Art will unveil "bi coke" Jan. 24. The drama revolves around a newly widowed socialite and her daughter and their efforts to help a boy from Sudan relocate to a major American city. As the two women become familiar with the plight of the young boy and his fellow immigrants, their perceptions of Africa, and their own experience of loss, are transformed. This moving piece will entertain audiences through March 8.

The San Diego Zoo starts off the year with the local premiere of a recent documentary hit, "Chuck." A stirring chronicle of the Pulitzer Prize-winning show stopped in San Diego last year, but it will be exciting to see the 2-year-old starring in this fascinating parade. Todd Salter directs "Chuck," which is set to remain at the intimate Living Space Jan. 10-Feb. 6. You won't just be an observer in

that fascinating drama of uncertainty. It's up to you to make the final verdict.

North Coast Repertory Theatre's "The Dresser" offers audiences a behind-the-scenes look at life in the theater (opening Jan. 14). David Hensel's classic has a double portrait of an old actor-manager training the provinces of England. "The Dresser" takes place during World War II, as Grenier plans to carry the London Blitz. San Diego actress Jennifer Maloney will do the honors in this virtuoso role.

The San Diego Natural History Museum's exhibition of paintings and artwork by wildlife artist Robert Bateman is on view through the end of January. The show features 50 pieces by the acclaimed artist. "Their Imagery by Kenneth Parker" featured to remain at the museum through March 17 showcases Parker's fine art photographs of the culture and landscape of Tibet.

The Museum of Contemporary Art's "Human Nature: Animals Respond to a Changing Planet," a show that investigates the relationships between natural systems and human culture through modern art, is being exhibited through Feb. 1. But you'll have to hurry to see "Weighting and Wanting: 25 years of Collecting" (in honor of director Hugh Davies' 25 year tenure at the museum) at the La Jolla library before it closes Jan. 11.

The Reuben H. Fleet Science Center recently opened its newly renovated IMAX Theater, and it's now featuring three films: "Wild Ocean" (an explosive spectacle about the underwater struggle for survival); "Diving for Genius" (a journey through the artist's nine year career, which spans some of his most famous paintings) and "Animals On Earth," a high-stakes and imaginary look at a variety of animals. The latter is a bonanza for the kids. All three IMAX films are a...
THEATER


Peter and the Starcatchers, Feb. 12-Mar. 8: Reveals the wonderful story that precedes J. M. Barrie’s beloved Peter Pan. Times/prices vary. La Jolla Playhouse, UCSD Campus, La Jolla. 858/550-1010. www.lajollaplayhouse.org.


AROUND SOUTHERN CAL

COMPiled BY FIELDING BUCK | THE PRESS-ENTERPRISE

LA COUNTY

BIG TIX

ENDURING MUSIC: Los Angeles Philharmonic conductor Esa Pekka Salonen teams with pianist Emanuel Ax on a program of Mozart and Brahms.
8 p.m. today. Saturday; 2 p.m. Sunday, Walt Disney Concert Hall, 111 S. Grand Ave., Los Angeles. $17-$147, 213-622-7300, www.phil.org.

FANTASY LAND: Los Angeles Opera presents Mozart's "The Magic Flute," with a whimsical design by cartoonist Gerald Scarfe. It opens 7:30 p.m. Saturday.

NEW TAKE: Deaf West Theatre is reviving the Stephen Schwartz musical "Pippin" in a production at the Mark Taper Forum that incorporates American Sign Language. Performances begin Thursday.

ORANGE COUNTY

NEW MOVES: "Stomp," featuring a cast of eight dancers making percussion music out of unconventional objects, is at the Orange County Performing Arts Center through Sunday.
7:30 p.m. today and Saturday; 2 p.m. Sunday, 19777 S. Main St., Costa Mesa. $10-$80. 949-662-2787, www.ocpac.org.

MORRISSEY TRIBUTE: Sweet and Tender Hooligans perform 7 p.m. Saturday at the House of Blues.

SAN DIEGO

BABY ROOM: More than 30 baby chicks have been born to penguins at SeaWorld San Diego since November. Some are on display in the park's Penguin Encounter.
500 SeaWorld Dr., San Diego. $65, ages 3-9 $55, 1-818-536-3800.

STILL AT IT: The Smothers Brothers mix music, comedy and sibling rivalry in two shows at the California Center for the Arts.

SOCIAL SATIRE: John Guare’s "Six Degrees of Separation," the play that launched the whole Kevin Bacon thing, begins performances 8 p.m. Saturday at the Old Globe. For mature audiences.
11 SUNDAY

Emily Albrink. The soprano sings Alban Berg's Sieben frushe Lieder; John Musto's Penelope; Modest Mussorgsky's The Nursery; and John Harbison's setting of Walt Whitman poetry titled Vocalism. Raitt Recital Hall, Pepperdine University, 24255 Pacific Coast Highway, Malibu. $25. 310-506-4522.


THEATER


MUSIC

Augustine Hadelich, violinist Program includes works by Stravinsky, Tchaikovsky and Sarasate. Guest artist Linda May Olmsted and the San Diego Youth Symphony will also perform. 2:30 p.m. Jan. 11. The San Diego Symphony, 10640 John Jay Hopkins Drive, La Jolla, $5-$40. (619) 238-0400, www.sandiegosymphony.org.


DANCE

Friday, Jan. 16

'Six Degrees of Separation':
John Guare's Obie-Award winning play *Six Degrees of Separation* is an intriguing, insightful exploration of celebrity and the games we play to elevate our significance — and it's playing through Feb. 15 at The Old Globe Theatre. In the play, the Kittredges' lives revolve around the high-stakes world of the New York art scene, where the appearance of success is everything. One evening as they are entertaining, a charming young man enchants the couple. As their involvement with him takes unexpected twists and turns, they begin to question not only his identity but their own. Tickets range from $29-$68. For more information, visit www.theoldglobe.org or call the box office at 619-23-GLOBE (45623).

Friday, Jan. 16
Tony Award-winner Karen Ziemba leads cast at Old Globe's 'Six Degrees of Separation'

The Tony Award®-winning Old Globe presents the Pulitzer Prize-winning Six Degrees of Separation, by John Guare (The House of Blue Leaves, Landscape of the Body), directed by Trip Cullman, will run in the Old Globe Theatre Jan. 10 – Feb. 15. Broadway veteran Karen Ziemba, who will play “Ouisa,” won the Tony for the musical “Contact” and was nominated for her work in “Steel Pier,” “Never Gonna Dance” and “Curtains.” Tickets are available by calling (619) 23-GLOBE, online at www.TheOldGlobe.org, or by visiting the Globe Box Office at 1363 Old Globe Way in Balboa Park.
"Six Degrees of Separation" — The Old Globe presents John Guare's Pulitzer Prize-winning play about a charming con artist who convinces a wealthy Upper East Side couple that he's the son of a famous film star opera Saturday and runs through Feb. 15; showtimes, 7 p.m. Sundays, Tuesdays and Wednesdays; 8 p.m. Thursdays and Saturdays; 2 p.m. Saturdays and Sundays; Old Globe Theatre, Balboa Park, San Diego; 629-660; (619) 234-5023.
Old Globe
presents 'Six Degrees of Separation'

The Tony Award®-winning Old Globe presents the Pulitzer Prize-winning Six Degrees of Separation, by John Guare (The House of Blue Leaves, Landscape of the Body), directed by Trip Cullman, will run in the Old Globe Theatre Jan. 10 – Feb. 15. Broadway veteran Karen Ziemba, who will play "Ouisa," won the Tony for the musical "Contact" and was nominated for her work in "Steel Pier," "Never Gonna Dance" and "Curtains!." Tickets are available by calling (619) 23-GLOBE, online at www.TheOld-Globe.org, or by visiting the Globe Box Office at 1363 Old Globe Way in Balboa Park.
上流階級の夫妻と謎めいた黒人青年の交流／J・ゲアによる大ヒット戯曲

③ ニューヨーク五番街。高級マンションに暮らす美術商のキドリッジ夫妻は上流階級の生活を楽しんでいた。ある夜、自宅でパーティーを開いていたところ、不気味な黒人青年が助けを求め訪ねてくる。ポールと名乗る彼は、ハーバード大学に通う夫妻の息子の同級生で、父親は名優シドニー・ポワチエであると言う。夫妻は洗練された身のこなしと上品な言葉使いの彼に信頼し、家へ上げる。ポールは巧みな会話でパーティーに訪れていた人々を魅了し、見事なグルメ料理の腕前も披露する。おかげで、ゲストの1人と交渉していた資金絡りの話もスムーズにまとまる。その夜、キドリッジ家に泊めてもらうことになったポールは、父親が監督を務める自作の映画に夫妻を出演させると約束する。ところが、その後、彼の話はすべて虚構であると判明してしまう——。

④ 現代アメリカ映画界を代表する劇作家ジョン・ゲアによる戯曲。上流階級で虚栄心を張って生きる人々の心の深淵を描く異色の人間ドラマとして、ブロードウェイを始め、世界中で絶賛された。1993年にはゲア自ら脚本を手がけて、フレッド・スケビン監督、ストッカード・チャニング、ウィル・スミス、ドナルド・サザーランドらの出演により映画化されている（邦題「私に近い6人の他人」）。"Six Degrees of Separation"（六次難隔たり）には、人が自分の知り合いを6人以上介すること、世界中の人々と間接的な知り合いになるという意味が込められている。

① THE GLOBE THEATRES (Old Globe Theatre), 1363 Old Globe Way, Balboa Park / 619-239-2255 (T) 期間—1/10（土）～2/15（日）迄。上演—火・水曜：7pm、木・金曜：8pm、土曜：2pm & 8pm、日曜：2pm & 7pm。チケット—未定。http://www.oldglobe.org